

THE DOCTRINE OF ONE ACTOR: JUNAYD'S VIEW OF *TAWHID*

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THE most outstanding figure among the early sufis is undoubtedly Junayd's. More than any other of that age he contributed to the growth of what constitutes the mainstream of sulism. The famous eighteenth century Indian scholar and sufi, Waliy Allah (d. 1176/1762), in an exceedingly illuminating review of the development of sufism, describes Junayd's contribution as follows:

"All founders of sulī *tariqahs* and expounders of sulī doctrines, or at least the majority of them, agree on the fundamental principles of the sufi *tariqah*, even though they differ with regards to the methods of their practical realization. These fundamental principles are associated with the name of Junayd, the leader of the sufi community (*Sayyid 'l-ta'ifah*); for, most of these principles have been formulated by him. The sufis of his age turned to him, and in fact all sulī orders originate from him, except of course such leaders as claim to have no teacher."¹

There would hardly be a sufi who would not agree with this assessment. From Qushayri² (d. 465/1072) and Hujwari³ (490/1096) to Attar⁴ (d. 622/1225) and Jami⁵ (d. 898/1494) all introduce Junayd in language very similar to what Waliy Allah has said. In what follows we shall discuss the basic principles of the sufi *tariqah* which were formulated by Junayd. We shall next discuss some of the speculative ideas that Junayd has suggested. His, probably, the first⁶ attempt to go beyond the description of mystical experience and suggest concepts that would explain and justify that experience. These concepts once proffered have remained an integral part of the sulī theosophy.

Abu'l-Qasim al-Junayd ibn Muhammad ibn 'l-Junayd al-Khazzaz⁷ was born at Baghdad in the first decade of the third century Hijrah. His family belonged originally to Nahawand in the Iranian province of Jabal that was conquered at the time of Amir 'l-Muminin 'Umar (d. 23/644). His father was a glass merchant (*al-qawariri*); his uncle, Sariy 'l-Saqati, an outstanding sulī of the time, was a trader in spices and seasoning, and Junayd himself was a dealer in raw silk (*khazzaz*). His father died while he was quite young. His uncle then brought him up and looked after his education. Junayd learned the Qur'an and studied hadith and liqh from Abu Thawr (d. 240/834) a

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prominent scholar of fiqh who dominated the stage in Iraq before Imam Shafi'i appeared there. Junayd acquired such a proficiency in fiqh that he answered queries in the presence of his teacher⁸ while he was still twenty.⁹ Ibn Sarraj (d. 306/919) a renowned jurist of the times was a great admirer of Junayd's expertise and acknowledged that he learned a lot from his sessions with Junayd.¹⁰

Baghdadi records the tribute that the Mu'tazili theologian Abu'l-Qasim 'l-Ka'bi paid to Junayd: "I saw in Baghdad a Shaykh like whom my eyes have seen none before. Writers come to him for words, philosophers for ideas, poets for imageries, theologians for discourses, and the level of his talk is always higher than their's; it is more profound, more elegant, and more learned."¹¹ This means that Junayd was a thoroughly cultured man, conversant with various disciplines of his times, far above the scholars of the age, a poet¹² and a writer. He once said of himself: "God has not created on the earth any knowledge and shown the way to it to mankind in which he has not given me a share."¹³ His couplets that have been produced by Abu Nasr 'l-Sarraj,¹⁴ and letters that have been recorded by him,¹⁵ and words that have been preserved by various authorities are ample testimony to his literary talents. His style is very lucid and clear. However, some of his letters which have been published recently by 'Abd 'l-Qadir¹⁶ have been put in a very difficult and obscure language. This has been, I think, deliberately done in order to keep the ideas in the discourses out of reach of common men.

Junayd must have been aware of theological discussions that were going on among the theologians at Baghdad. His association with Harith 'l-Muhasibi¹⁷ (d. 243/837), who wrote in refutation of the Mutazilite doctrines, strengthens this view. Junayd would have also been aware of some philosophical ideas. Translations of Greek words into Arabic had started more than a century before him in Baghdad, and the Arabic version of the so-called *Theology of Aristotle* was already in use.¹⁸ It is very unlikely therefore that Junayd would have been unaware of philosophical ideas. However, he seems to have followed a deliberate policy of keeping his popular writings and discourses free from theological and philosophical ideas. To that extent he seems to have carefully heeded Sariy's warning: "Go to al-Muhasibi and accept his knowledge and disciplines, but be aware of his refutation of the *Mu'tazilah*."¹⁹ The reason for this policy is the same that lies behind his obscure discourses.

Junayd's teachers in sufism were his uncle Sariy 'l-Saqati (d. 257/870), Harith 'l-Muhasibi (d. 243/857) and Abu Ja'far Muhammad 'l-Qassab (d. 257/849). Sariy²⁰ initiated him into sufism, and influenced him most, particularly in forming Junayd's attitude towards the Shari'ah. "Sariy was", Qushayri says, "unique in his time in purity, in observance of the

Sunnah, and in the knowledge of *Tawhid*.”²¹ In his view, “the true sufi is one the light of whose gnosis does not drown the light of his piety, whose esoteric discourses never conflict with the words of the Qur’an and the *Sunnah*, and whose miracles do not tear the veils that have been placed on things forbidden by God.”²² His prayer for Junayd was: “May God make you a *muhaddith* (i.e., scholar of *hadith*) sufi and not a sufi *muhaddith*.”²³ Junayd acknowledges his debt to Sariy when he says: “I studied law formulated by the scholars of *hadith* like Abu Ubayd (d. 224/838) and Abu Thawr (d. 240/834). Later I joined the company of Harith ‘l-Muhasibi and Sariy ibn Mughallath. That has been the reason for my success. Our knowledge must be controlled by conformity with the Qur’an and the *Sunnah*. Whoever has not learned the Qur’an by heart, has not formally studied *hadith* and *fiqh* before embarking on sufism, has no right to guide people.”²⁴ It is significant that Junayd preferred to wear the dress of a scholar rather than a sufi.²⁵

Harith ‘l-Muhasibi was not an ascetic like Sariy and seems to have contributed to the balance and moderation that we get in Junayd’s life. However, Junayd did not follow Muhasibi’s obsession with uncovering the hidden tricks of the carnal self (*al-nafs*) or his hair-splitting analysis of vice. He joined his company at a mature age of thirty and accepted from him what he found consistent with the spirit of the Qur’an and the *Sunnah*.

About his association with Abu Ja‘lar Muhammad ‘l-Qassab Junayd says: “People associate me mainly with Sariy, but my real teacher is Muhammad ‘l-Qassab”²⁶ (d. 275/888).” It is very difficult to determine what prompted this remark, for very little is known about Junayd’s association with the latter. Junayd once asked ‘l-Qassab about *tasawwuf*. He replied: “*Tasawwuf* is noble behaviour from a noble man in the assembly of noble men.”²⁷ This underlines the importance of noble behaviour in sufism and may have contributed to the formation of Junayd’s attitude to social virtues. However, this is not enough to account for the remark of Junayd about his indebtedness to ‘l-Qassab which has been referred above.

Almost all major works on sufism contain Junayd’s words and teachings. The most important among them is the *Kitab ‘l-Luma’* of al-Sarraj (d. 378/788); however, Sulami, Kalabadhi, Qushayri, Hujweyri and Abu Nu‘aym have also preserved many important words. The Collection of Junayd’s Letters published by Abd ‘l-Qadir are particularly important for understanding his speculative ideas. A number of works have been attributed to Junayd, some of which are extant; but as Abd ‘l-Qadir has shown,²⁸ they are not genuine. They rather demonstrate how people have tried to justify their own ideas by attributing them to outstanding masters of sufism.

The Sufi Tariqah

Junayd looked upon sufism as a higher way of life meant for the elect as

opposed to the way of common people. "Tasawwuf," he says, "is to purge the heart from every wish to follow the path of common men. It means to relinquish natural desires (*al-akhlaw 'l-taba'iyah*), to wipe out human attributes (*al-sifat 'l-bashariyah*), to discard selfish motives (*al-da'awi al-nafsaniyah*), to cultivate spiritual qualities (*al-sifat 'l-ruhaniyah*), to devote oneself to true knowledge, to do what is best in the context of eternity, to wish good for the entire community, to be truly faithful to God, and to follow the Prophet in the matters of the Shari'ah.²⁹" This is a concise statement of the sufi ideal. What follows in the subsequent pages may be considered an elaboration of what Junayd has said here.

The first step towards its realization is to practice *zuhd*, renunciation. Junayd defines *zuhd* as "keeping hands away from possessions and the heart from longing for them."³⁰ In his view "the best of mankind are the poor who are happy with their poverty."³¹ Junayd does not, however, seem to be very strict on this point. He does not think that renunciation of property, money or material goods is absolutely necessary for each and every sufi. For advanced sufis, in particular, he did not consider it indispensable, and recommended rather a renunciation in the heart. To a query by one of his advanced disciples, Ruwaym³² (d. 303/915) he defined *zuhd* as "looking down upon the world (*dunya*) and removing every love for it from the heart."³³ And the world, he characterized as that "which clings to the heart and distracts you from God."³⁴ In other words renunciation is not so much freedom of the hand from the possession of property, money, or goods, as it is freedom of the heart from being possessed by these things and from distraction of the mind from God. Real renunciation is a quality of the mind, an inner attitude. Junayd's own life was an example of this kind of *zuhd*. He remained a merchant throughout his life and seems to have had considerable means. This has unfortunately led some people to question³⁵ the genuineness of his abstinence. Junayd had, however, no love for worldly goods; he spent little on himself, and more on his sufi friends³⁶ who were poor. He fasted all the year except on days he had visitors.³⁷ "We did not attain this thing (i.e. sufism)," he said, "by discussions; we rather acquired it through hunger, renunciation of the world, and abstaining from things ordinarily needed and desired."³⁸ On another occasion he said: "Our sufism is based on four things: We do not speak unless we experience; do not eat unless we starve; we do not sleep unless we are overpowered; and we do not keep silent except for the fear of God."³⁹

In his definition of the sufi idea Junayd has referred to relinquishing natural desires as the first step. This is not an exaggeration; he really means it. Sufism is not a matter of controlling natural desires and fulfilling them within limits. It is rather reducing them as much as possible, it stands not for moderation, but for the suppression of desires. Junayd said to one of his

disciples, Khuldi, that "he did not change his dress for going to bed for forty years."⁴⁰ That does not obviously mean that Junayd did not sleep during this period; it only means that he did not prepare himself for sleep, rather he fell asleep when he was completely overpowered.

The second principle of the *sulī tariqah* that Junayd had the honour to found is the withdrawal from society. He was more strict on this point than the first. He said: "One who wants to save his religion and enjoy peace of mind and body, should keep away from men, because these are troubled times. He is wise who lives in seclusion."⁴¹ This remark is primarily directed against the men of means and power, in the government or outside. With respect to them Junayd's advice is absolute. When Ruwaym accepted the post of a judge in the Government, he expressed a strong resentment: "If you want to see a man who had hidden in his heart the love of the world for twenty years, look at this man."⁴² Similarly when his friend 'Amr ibn 'Uthman 'l-Makki⁴³ (d. 291/903-4) took up a similar post, Junayd separated himself from him.⁴⁴ He did not like to be involved in government or in politics. That might be one of the reasons why he disliked Hallaj (d. 309/921) and denounced him.⁴⁵ Junayd had a very gloomy view of the world: he considered it absolutely rotten and thoroughly corrupt, and could not see safety except in withdrawal. "What happens to me," he says, "in this world is not bad. For I believe in the truth that this world is a place of sorrow, anxiety, trouble and suffering. I believe that it is thoroughly evil, so it is not unexpected that it should inflict on me all that is detestable."⁴⁶

Junayd did not, however, recommend flight from society, nor condoned the neglect of ordinary social duties that the *Shari'ah* prescribed. A *sufī* cannot be a hermit (*rahib*); he has to live with all kinds of men; he is neither to avoid the poor, nor to look towards the rich.⁴⁷ He must be meek and forbearing.⁴⁸ He should not harm any one, and must be magnanimous to all.⁴⁹ "No one can be a true gnostic," Junayd said, "unless he is like the earth that everyone, good or bad, treads with his feet; and like the clouds that protect everyone from heat; and like the rain that waters every land it likes or does not like."⁵⁰ He also said: "The real witness to God's unity are those who live in the world as if they do not live, and withdraw from it as if they do not withdraw. They live in things with their bodies, and live away from them in their inner hearts."⁵¹

Junayd was married, yet he regarded marriage as an impediment to the progress of the spirit. "The *sufī* who marries and is engaged in traditional knowledge," he said, "is of no use."⁵² A loyal female servant⁵³ looked after him and also after two of his friends, Nuri⁵⁴ (d. 295/907) and Abu Hamzah⁵⁵ (d. 269/882). He was offered a slave girl, but he did not accept her, and presented her to a friend.⁵⁶ Junayd's *tariqah* is based on the denial of the natural urges of men. This is part of what he calls "the wiping out of

human attributes."⁵⁷

The third principle of the sufi *tariqah* is intensive concentration on devotions (*'ibadat*) and remembrance (*dhikr*) of God. It has been reported that at his shop in the market Junayd used to pray three hundred *raka'at* and say thirty thousand *tasbihs* every day.⁵⁸ At home he prayed four hundred *rik'ahs* every night.⁵⁹ He fasted all the year round except on days when fast is forbidden or when he had guests. He preferred to eat with guests saying that eating with friends is not inferior to fasting.⁶⁰ He viewed fasting as half the *tariqah*.⁶¹ He maintained these practices till the end of his life. When death came (297/910) he was busy in prayer making long prostrations on the ground. Jariri, who saw him in this state, said: "Sir, you have reached such heights, even then you are exerting yourself so much at this hour. Would you rest a while?" Junayd replied: "I am never in greater need of it than this moment," and went on like that till he breathed his last.⁶² In his view no sufi can ever outgrow the need of observing the *Shari'ah*. A man said to him that some gnostics of God reach a stage where they dispense with good acts and devotions. Junayd reacted sharply: "These people talk of dropping good works; this is indeed a great sin. They are worse than thieves and adulterers. The true gnostics of God accept duties from God and turn to him fulfilling them. If I were to live for a thousand years I would not stop doing even the smallest acts, unless I am prevented from them."⁶³ For the last twenty years, he said one day, he had not missed the opening *takbir* of the obligatory prayer in the mosque.⁶⁴

The sufi certainly multiplies devotions, but he is more interested in doing them better. A descendant of the Amir 'l-Muminin, 'Ali (d. 40/661) visited Junayd on his way to Hajj. Junayd said: "O Sayyed, your great grandfather had two swords: with one he fought the infidels, and with the other he fought his own self. You are his son, which of these two things do you do?" Hearing this the man burst into tears and said: "Sir, my Hajj is here. Please show me the way to God." Junayd said: "Your heart is the most sacred house (*haram*) of God. Don't let any thing enter into His house so long as you can." He said: "That is enough."⁶⁵

The fourth principle of the *tariqah* is sincerity. Whatsoever the sufi does, he must do it for the sake of God. That is, he should do his devotions, good works, and *dhikr* just because it would please God, not because it would please any one else or secure him happiness. "Sincerity," Junayd says, "is to desire nothing but God in all that one does."⁶⁶ Elsewhere he says: "Sincerity is to keep away creation from your relation with God; and mind you, your self is a created thing."⁶⁷ It must be noted here that in Junayd we hardly get a statement that shows that he ever thought that there is a contradiction between seeking God's pleasure and seeking happiness in the life hereafter, as we get in Rabi'ah 'l-Adwiyah⁶⁸ (d.185/801) or Abu Yazid (d. 261/875)

before him.⁶⁹

This is, however, one aspect of sincerity. The other aspect is that the sufi should realize that whatever he does is not the result of his efforts, but a pure favour of God. "Sincerity is to avoid seeing yourself in what you do, and to disappear from it."⁷⁰ Junayd makes the same point in different ways: "To be graceful is to avoid vice, and cultivate virtue and excellence, and to work for God and then to think that is not your doing."⁷¹ Or, "Poverty means to forget looking (to yourself) and stop attributing things (to your will)."⁷²

Sincere devotion and self-negating submission pave the way for the love of God, which is the fifth principle of the sufi tariqah. In a gathering of elder sufis of Makkah Junayd was asked to describe love. Tears came up in his eyes when he started saying: "The lover is a servant (of God) who departs from himself; who remembers Him constantly; who is busy in discharging his duties towards Him; who sees Him by heart; whose heart is set ablaze by the light of His Essence (*Huwiyyah*); who drinks a pure draught from the cup of His love; to whom the Transcendent (*al-Jabbar*) reveals Himself from under the veils of transcendence (*ghaybah*). If he speaks, it is by God (that he speaks); if he discourses, it is God (that he discourses); if he moves it is at God's command; and if he is silent, it is with God." Hearing these words the Shaykhs burst out into tears and said: "May God comfort you, O the Crown of Gnostics."⁷³

Love is much more than self-negating submission and sincere devotion. "It is," Junayd says, "a feeling of profound attachment."⁷⁴ The object of the sufi's love is primarily the Essence of God, but Junayd takes care not to exclude from the orbit of that love the duties that God imposes on the sufi with regard to his own being and to his fellowmen. "Love", he says, "is an inclination of the heart, it is turning to God and to your duties spontaneously."⁷⁵ On another occasion he said: "The essence of love (*'ayn 'l-mahabbah*) is that you love what God loves for his servants, and hate what he dislikes for his servants."⁷⁶

"Living by God, for God and with God" is what Junayd refers to elsewhere as the *replacement of the attributes of man by the attributes of God*. He elaborates his point by quoting the holy tradition: "The servant draws near to me by supererogatory acts till I love him. And when I love him I become his eyes by which he sees; his ears by which he hears; and his hand by which he grasps."⁷⁷

This holy tradition means at first hand that the servant of God reaches a state where the ordinary disparity between his looking at things, choosing and doing, and that of God disappears. He sees things as God would like him to see, chooses as he would like him to choose and acts as he would like him to act. His perception, will and action are, in other words, replaced by God's perception, will and action. The *hadith* means, secondly, that God empowers

his servants sometimes with such special powers to perceive, decide and act which are not ordinarily available to him, so that when he sees, hears, wills or acts, it is as it were not he but God who acts in him. This is how the *hadith* is ordinarily interpreted.

But Junayd and other sufis read into the *hadith* something more. They say that whenever the sufi wills or does anything, whether ordinary or extraordinary, he perceives that it is not he but God who wills and does this in him. Now this perception (*ruyah*) may be understood in two ways. One is that whenever one chooses and does something good, one feels that his own contribution is quite small in comparison with what God has done. This perception becomes so strong that the sufi forgets his own part, and sees only the hand of God in his doings. Junayd's words: "To be graceful is that you act for God, and then perceive that it is not you who have acted,"⁷⁸ may also refer to this idea in addition to what we have said earlier. This interpretation of the holy tradition is not inconsistent with what scholars of tradition understand by it. The second meaning of the perception is that sufi perceives that he himself does not have any powers at all, and all that he apparently wills or does is in reality willed and done by God. He is no more than a hollow form (*shabah*) devoid of will and power; he does not move by himself; it is God who moves him. This perception is known in later sufi terminology as *tawhid fi'li* or Unity of Action. At first it is just a matter of mystical experience, but then it develops into a belief about the nature of things: it becomes a doctrine. There are clear statements in Junayd's writings that show that he actually held that doctrine. For instance:

'*Al-tawhid* is certitude (*al-yaqin*) . . . It is your knowledge that movements of things and their rest is the action of God alone without the participation of anything else. When you do this you affirm His unity in reality.⁷⁹ That is, you affirm that God alone does His acts; for nothing in fact does its acts. Certitude is the name of *tawhid*; when it is perfect, it becomes pure.⁸⁰

The following reply to a question put to Junayd is another instance:

Question: "Is it that what one does is his own action?"

Answer: "No, it is the act of God in you, and it demands that you should be thankful that he acted for you."⁸¹

The next important principle of the sufi *tariqah* is contemplation (*muraqabah*). "What is the way to God?" Answering this question Junayd described the steps in this way: "Repentance that rules out insistence on sin; fear that destroys vain expectations; hope that keeps you on the road of righteousness, and contemplation of God that does not allow other ideas in the heart."⁸² On another occasion he emphasized the importance of contemplation thus: "The best and the noblest sitting is one of

contemplation (*fikrah*) in the field of *tawhid*.”⁸³ Contemplation reveals truth and unveils the secrets of *tawhid*. Asked from whom he obtained the *sulī* knowledge, Junayd replied: “I got it from sitting before God for thirty years under these stairs,” pointing to the stairs in his house.⁸⁴

Mystical Experience

Contemplation produces *fanaʿ*. Although *fanaʿ* is a particular stage in the spiritual development of the *sufi*, the word may be employed to characterize the various stages of his development we have so far described. That is because these stages are in reality the stages of self-negation (*fanaʿ*), as we have seen. Using *fanaʿ* in this wider sense, Junayd sums up the various stages as follows:

“There are three stages of *fanaʿ*: The first is transcendence of attributes (*sifat*), dispositions (*akhlaq*) and natural (*tabaʿi*) desires. You attain to this by carrying out your duties, by striving hard and by opposing the carnal soul (*al-nafs*) and denying it its desires through imposing on it unpleasant things.”

The second stage of *fanaʿ* is that you relinquish all thought of joy and pleasure that you may get in obeying God’s commands. You attain to this stage when you comply to the demands of God purely for His sake.

The third stage of *fanaʿ* is that you cease to be conscious of your ecstatic experience (of God) as a result of an overwhelming vision of God’s witness (*shahid*) to you. At this stage you die as well as live, and you live in reality, for you die to yourself and live by God. Your personal characteristics (*rasm*) survive, but your independent existence (*ʿism*) vanishes.”⁸⁵

Of these stages the first two require no comments, the reader has acquainted himself with them in the foregoing pages. We shall, therefore, confine ourselves to the third stage that constitutes *fanaʿ* in the technical sense of the term. The first thing that Junayd makes clear is that the extraordinary experience of *fanaʿ* is essentially a matter of God’s witness made entirely on His own initiative. The *sufi* does not achieve it; it is given to him. Secondly, in the experience of *fanaʿ* the *sulī* participates in the real life, as his false sense of independent existence vanishes and he realises the truth that he exists entirely by God. Thirdly, the experience does not destroy the personal identity (*rasm*) of the *sufi*; on the contrary, it strengthens it by making him realize his rootedness in God.

Junayd points out various characteristics of the experience of *fanaʿ*. First, it is an affective experience. “Knowledge of the unity of God,” he says, “is other than the experience of God, and the experience of God is altogether different from knowing Him.”⁸⁶ Secondly, it is an experience in which one transcends time. “The experience of *tawhid* is going out of the limitations of

time and entering into the expanse of eternity."⁸⁷ Thirdly, it is an experience of oneness with God in which the sufi loses the consciousness of his own identity and of the things around. "Nearness to God in ecstasy (*wajd*) is union (*jam'*) with God."⁸⁸ And "*tawhid* is an experience in which the consciousness of individuality vanishes and knowledge of things is withdrawn, and God appears as He has been in eternity."⁸⁹ At the higher stage of the experience even the consciousness of forgetting oneself is gone. At this stage *fana'* becomes perfect.⁹⁰ When one is not aware of dying to oneself one lives (in God) entirely.⁹¹

Fana' is a participation in the 'real life'. But it is not the highest point of the sufi experience, nor the most real life. This comes out clearly in Junayd's comments on the experience of Abu Yazid. He observes that "the reports of Abu Yazid's experiences show that he reached the stage of 'pure union' (*'ayn 'l-jam'*)⁹² and remarks: "In spite of the high levels he had reached and the sublime language he uses in alluding to them, Abu Yazid did not cross the first stages. I have not heard of words that tell of the final perfection."⁹³ This verdict on the final experience of Abu Yazid is (as we have shown in the previous chapter⁹⁴) not correct. It is based on incomplete reports about Abu Yazid's experiences that had reached Junayd. However, the remark makes it quite clear that Junayd views the experience of pure union (*'ayn 'l-jam'*) or *fana'* as a stage in the spiritual journey of the sufi that must be transcended in order to reach the final end.

The final stage of sufi experience is what Abu Yazid described as the state of 'separation after union'⁹⁵ or what Qushayri calls 'second separation'.⁹⁶ Junayd sings of this union in these lines:

'You enter into the inner depths of my being
And my tongue communicates with you.
So we are one in some senses, and different in others.
If consciousness of your Majesty makes me forget myself,
Ecstasy brings you close to my heart.'⁹⁷

In a rather difficult language Junayd describes the state of 'union and separation' as follows:

'The sufi now exists after he has not existed. He exists in the sense he exists. He is what he is, having ceased to be himself. He, therefore, exists: exists after he has been an existing non-existent. For he has come out of the effect of powerful intoxication to clear sobriety. his earlier vision is restored: he places things in their places, he regains his (human) attributes, regains his (personal) qualities and can pursue his acts after reaching the end destined for him.'⁹⁸

Junayd describes the difference between the stage of 'pure union' and that

of 'union and separation'. Whereas the state of 'pure union' is ecstatic, the state of 'union and separation' is a state of sobriety. Junayd remarks: "Ecstasy pleases those who feel happy with it. But when God witnesses you, ecstasy disappears."⁹⁹ Qushayri highlights the same point through quoting the words of his teacher Abu Ali al-Daqqaq (d. 410/1010): "One reaches God when one rises above ecstasy, and one does not realize God except when his humanity is completely obliterated, because humanity cannot survive when truth (*al-haqiqah*) overtakes."¹⁰⁰ Junayd puts the same thing in these words: "Realization of God (*wajd*) is the termination of ecstasy (*wajd*)."¹⁰¹ Secondly, the experience of 'pure union' is accomplished by "restlessness, turbulence, heat, fury and *shath*."¹⁰² whereas the experience of 'union and difference' is complete possession of ones senses and reason (*tamkin*).¹⁰³ Junayd refers to the accompanying states of the experience of 'pure union' when he says that "One cannot attain to true gnosis and pure *tawhid* till one passes over the states and stations."¹⁰⁴ Thirdly, the mystics stationed in the state of 'pure union' are given to making high claims (*da'awi*), whereas the state of 'union and separation' is a state of humility. This is implicit in the statement already made which associates *shath* with 'pure union'; for *shath*, by definition involves claim.¹⁰⁵ The state of union and separation, on the other hand, brings an intimacy wherein "one does feel awe."¹⁰⁶

Tawhid

Tawhid, as it is used in the sufi literature, means four different things. It refers, first, to a man's belief about God's unity, and consists essentially of some propositions about the nature of God and his relation with man and the world. These propositions may vary according as the believer is an ordinary man or a learned theologian. *Tawhid* refers, secondly, to disciplining one's life, external and internal in the light of the ones beliefs. Here again there may be differences between individuals regarding the areas of life that they subject to discipline and the emphasis they may place on them. *Tawhid* refers, thirdly, to the mystical experience of unity or union. This *tawhid* is neither belief nor discipline, it is an affective experience different in some ways from ordinary affective experiences. There are, as we have seen, different levels of this experience. At the initial levels the mystic is conscious of his oneness or union with God; at the next higher level, he is no more conscious of himself and his union with God, he is only conscious of a pure unity. *Tawhid* in this sense is another name for the experience of *fana'* as described above. At the final level of the experience, the mystic regains the consciousness of his difference from God, which is in fact a difference in unity or a separation in union. What is ordinarily called the unitive experience in academic discussions of our age often refers to the experience of unity at the second level of this experience, the experience of

what Junayd calls 'pure union'. *Tawhid* refers, fourthly, to a view of reality that arises from the mystical experience of unity. It is a combination of transcendental perception (*mushahadah*) and belief, a philosophical construction of reality, of the relation of the Eternal, as the mystic puts it, with the contingent in the light of the mystical experience. *Tawhid* in this sense is not found in the sufis before Junayd. It starts with Junayd. He initiated sufi doctrine, as he laid the foundations of the sufi *tariqah*. *Ma'rifah* means many things in the early sufi literature; in its technical sense of a super-rational knowledge of reality it is another name for *tawhid* in the last sense.

Our sources record a number of definitions that Junayd offers of *tawhid*. Some refer to belief,¹⁰⁷ some to practical discipline,¹⁰⁸ and some to mystical experience.¹⁰⁹ It would not be worthwhile to go over these definitions here. We shall rather discuss a passage from a letter published by Abdu 'l-Qadir wherein Junayd distinguishes between four ways of *tawhid*. It runs like this:

'Know that there are four ways of *tawhid* among the people. One is the *tawhid* of the common man; the second is the *tawhid* of the people versed in exoteric knowledge; the other two forms of *tawhid* are of the elect, that is, the people of gnosis (*ma'rifah*).

The *tawhid* of the common man is to profess God's unity (*wahdaniyah*), to negate all other gods, equal or unequal or qualified with any of His attributes, entertaining, however, hopes and fears in forces other than God. The essence of this *tawhid* lies in action along with profession.

The *tawhid* of people who are well versed in exoteric knowledge is to profess God's unity, deny all other gods, equal or unequal or qualified with any of His attributes, and to comply with His commands and prohibitions in external behaviour out of fear or hope, desire or greed. These people realize the truth of *tawhid* in behaviour because they really believe in what they profess.

As for the first form of *tawhid* of the elect, it is to profess God's unity, to negate all gods as mentioned above, and to comply with God's commands externally as well as internally, by removing all hopes and fears in things other than God. This arises from the seer's desire to follow (the will of God) as a result of God's witness to him wherein he is aware of God's call to him and his own response to God.

The next stage of the *tawhid* of the elect is to stand before God face to face with no one in between, like an empty form (*shabah*) on whom His decrees pass according as he in His omnipotence determines, and to be immersed deep in the waters of *tawhid* wherein one is no more conscious of oneself and of God's call to him and his response to it. This is the result of the realization of God's unity (*wahdaniyah*) in the experience of His

nearness in which he loses consciousness of his own self and his activity as God does for him what He has willed of him. This means that he becomes what he was before he came into existence.

The argument for this is the Word of God: "And when your Lord drew from their descendants, from the reins of the children of Adam, and called them to witness about themselves as He said: 'Am I not your Lord!', (and) they responded: "Yea, certainly."

Now, who existed, and how did they exist before they came into existence? Did anyone respond except pure, sweet and holy spirits to implement what the Almighty decreed and the Absolute Will commanded? They exist now as they existed before they came into existence. This is the perfection of witness to the unity of the One: "he ceases to exist."¹¹⁰

Junayd describes here the *tawhid* of the ordinary Muslim, the *tawhid* of the learned scholars (*'Ulama*) and the *tawhid* of the sufis. The ordinary Muslim denies the existence of visible gods, but does not free himself from the service of invisible gods, because he continues to fear forces other than God and seeks their favour. The *'Ulama* deny the invisible gods because they have realised that hopes and fears in forces other than God are contrary to true belief in one God. They are, nevertheless, far from reaching the summit of *tawhid*, because they comply with God's commands, not for the sake of God alone, but for some benefits they want to secure or some harm they want to ward off. Their obedience to God is, in other words, not out of simple love for God. The highest stage of *tawhid* is reserved for the people whom God has chosen in eternity. They alone are favoured with the experience of God's witness, which opens the way for the higher stage of *tawhid*. It removes the last traces of self-seeking and enables the seer to follow God's will just for its own sake. Junayd is quite explicit in asserting that a disinterested, selfless obedience to God is impossible without the experience of God's witness, since this is available only through following the sufi *tariqah*, the higher stages of *tawhid* are accessible to sufis only. This is Junayd's justification for the sufi *tariqah*. It may be noted here that this belief is shared by the majority of sufis.

At the first stage of the experience of God's witness, the sufi is conscious of his self, conscious of God's command and conscious of his response of compliance to the command. At the next stage, however, he has such a profound feeling of nearness (*qurb*) to God that he ceases to be conscious of his self or of being commanded by God, and of his response to it. All these forms of consciousness vanish, and are replaced by the consciousness of God and His action. He certainly does what God wishes him to do, but he does not see this as his own action; he rather sees that it is God who acts in him. He is reduced to an empty form (*shabah*) without will or movement of his own. He is like a straw in the ocean of Divinity tossed to and fro as its mighty

waves determine.

We must carefully note the words Junayd chooses to describe the final state of *tawhid*. It is an experience of nearness (*qurb*), rather than union: the sufi stands with God in closest proximity, he is not one with Him. He is certainly not conscious of the distinctions of divine calling (*da'wat*) and his own response (*istijabah*), but that is the effect of his profound experience of nearness, not of union or oneness. The sufi does not perceive that he acts, he perceives that God acts in him. There is only the will of God and his action. This is the highest truth which the sufi realises in the final state of his experience.

The final experience is not the experience of One Being (*wahdat 'l-wujud*), it is an experience of One Actor (*wahdat 'l-fa'il*). It negates, not the multiplicity of beings, but the multiplicity of actors, and reveals, not the unity of being, but the unit of doing. The last part of the passage that we have quoted above is an effort by Junayd to determine the nature of human existence in the light of this experience and seek support for his views from the Qur'an. He starts by referring to the verse in the Qur'an that speaks of a primordial covenant between God and human souls in which they were asked to testify to God's Lordship, and they most readily did so. He infers from the verse that human souls have a kind of existence before they actually come into existence. For if they had not existed in any sense, they could not have been addressed and could not have testified. But it is also equally true that they could not have had an existence separate from the existence of God, for that would mean the eternity of souls and would go against the Islamic belief that souls are created. They must have, therefore, an existence that is in between existence and non-existence. They did not exist in that they did not have an independent existence, and they existed in so far as they existed in and by God. They were one with God as well as different from him.

It is the same kind of existence which the sufi comes to realise in the final stage of his experience. Hence the ideal of the sufi is to return to a state of existence that he had before he actually came to exist, "to be as he was before he was," as Junayd says. The reason why such a state is commendable and should be the ideal for the sufi is that it is a state when the dominance of God over the human soul is perfect and the submission of the soul to God's command spontaneous and absolute. Junayd discusses these points in his letters on the 'Eternal Covenant'. He writes:

God created them near him in the state of eternity with him as vehicles for unity to mount when he called them (to witness), and they responded — a response that was an act of grace by Him upon them. In fact He responded for them when he created them: He made them understand His call and know himself while they were nothing more than a proposal

(*mashi'ah*) that He put to Himself. He transferred them, raised them as seeds, produced them by His will into beings (*khalq*) and put them in the loins of Adam. Then he said: 'Remember! When your Lord brought from the children of Adam, from their backbones their off-springs and made them witness to themselves (as he said) 'Am I not your Lord? . . . ' Thus God tells that he addressed them when they did not exist except by His consciousness of them (*wujudihi lahum*) when they were conscious of God (*wajidin li'l-Haqq*) without being conscious of themselves (*min ghayr wujudihi li anfusihim*). God was really present in that (consciousness) in a sense known to or comprehended by none except him. he knew them (*wajid*), encompassed them and witnessed them, He originated them when they were dead to themselves (*fana' ihim*), when they existed in eternity for Eternity. They are the ones that truly exist, the ones that are dead in a state of nothingness (*fana' ihim*) and alive in a state of (eternal) life (*baqa' ihim*). . . . He perfected their death in their life and their life in their death. His decrees encompass them when he enforces His will on them, as He likes in his own transcendental way that no one shares. Hence this existence is the most perfect existence, the best, the most subservient to God's rule and power, and the most submissive to His decrees regarding them, so much so that their identity, individuality and existence are obliterated. For it has (in that state) no human characteristics, no tangible existence, and no discussable consequences: all of them are the outer garments of the souls, not belonging to them from eternity."¹¹⁴

It is quite clear from these passages that the souls of men existed with God as His ideas, for they 'did not exist except by God's consciousness of them.' They existed as His ideas which He knew and which He encompassed. They were dead in that they had no independent existence; they were alive in that they were conscious of God. Moreover, they existed for God to witness to his Lordship in eternity. But since they existed in a sense enough to witness to His Lordship, they were, therefore, more than ideas. They had thus two aspects: on the one hand they were ideas existing in God which He knew and encompassed, and, on the other, they were realities that were conscious of God and had the capacity to respond to God's call. It is the latter aspect which Junayd calls a godly existence (*wujud rabbani*), and since it is nothing but an idea in God, he also characterises it as intuitive awareness (*'idrak 'ilahi*).

It is also clear that the criterion why this state is the best state is not that it is something ideal, but because it is the state in which God's rule is most perfect. The criterion for the value of being is not its ideality, as the Greeks thought, but its quality of submitting to God's rule most completely.

The third thing which these passages make clear is that the souls in their

ideal state are in fact without a will. When they comply with God's call it is not they but God who complies to His own call in them. The will, which is one of the characteristics of man in his worldly existence, is given to him in this existence and does not belong to him originally. It is important to note that in spite of that fact, Junayd calls it a blessing of God, and not a curse. Human existence in the world, therefore, is not evil as Christianity would have it, it is a blessing. The task of the *sulī* is to subject this acquired will to complete submission to God, or in the words of Junayd to be replaced by the will of God. This is the task which God's witness to the *sufi* achieves. It destroys the independence of the human will and renders it completely submissive, as if he did not have a will, and turns him again to a state of possessing no will of his own, as he was in eternity before he came into this world.

These ideas of Junayd were somewhat different from the popular beliefs of the time. The common man, for instance, believed that the human soul is created and non-eternal. This was the view also of the scholars of tradition and the theologians of the time. According to Junayd, however, the soul is in a sense eternal and uncreated. The common man believed also that he possessed a will and was the doer of his acts. Although he recognised the overruling power of God and His grace (*tauḥīq*), he did not believe that God performed his acts. Traditional scholars and right-wing theologians regarded God as the Creator of acts and not their doer. To believe that God is the real actor, and to hold it as the ultimate truth, as Junayd does, would mean for them and for the common man to side with the determinists of the time like the Jahamiyah and the Karamiyah. It may be noted that the Ash'ari doctrine of *kasb* was yet to be born. In this situation Junayd's view on the issue would have been another point of popular resentment. The third thing that would have sounded strange to the common man and scandalized the doctors of tradition, was Junayd's claim that the mystic experience yields a new knowledge (*ma'rīfah*) which is not available to reason, nor discoverable through reflection over revelation when not guided by mystic experience. It is quite obvious that the real basis of the doctrine of One Actor is Junayd's experience of *fana'* rather than the covenant verse of the Qur'an which he cites. Junayd refers to the knowledge-yielding capacity of the mystic experience when he says: "I got this knowledge by sitting before God for thirty years beneath these stairs,"¹¹⁵ pointing to the stairs in his house.

Junayd was fully conscious that these doctrines of his were different from the beliefs of the common Muslim as well as the scholars. He naturally feared unpleasant consequences if they were known to people. That is why he put them in an exceedingly difficult and obscure language, and refrained from talking of them in public. He did not like that his disciples and friends should talk about them. He admonished Shibli for his unrestrained words

on one occasion: "We put this knowledge in an embellished language and concealed it in underground tunnels. But you come and pronounce it in public."¹¹⁶

It is difficult to ascribe ideas to Junayd over and above the ones we have discussed. Taken together, they do not make a theosophy, but only form a part of a theosophical viewpoint, some very important issues of which, Junayd does not answer (nor even raise). He found in his mystical experience a complete negation of will, and his speculation was only concerned with providing a justification for that experience. He did not raise the question as to who is the subject of other human attributes — faith, knowledge, suffering and happiness — man, as we commonly believe, or God?; nor did he ask whether existence is one, or what is the relation between human existence and Divine existence? To attribute to him, therefore, a monism of existence¹¹⁷ (*tawhid wujudi*), even a unity of attributes (*tawhid sifati*) would be preposterous. He did develop a doctrine of the unity of action (*tawhid fi'li*), which may be regarded as an act of transcendentalisation (*tanzih*) — as the Ashar'iyah did later — as well as of immanentization, which is, in a way, the first step towards a monism of being.¹¹⁸